

Due to Covid, there will not be any in-person worship. Our goal is to reopen February 13, 2022 if the Covid numbers have improved.

JANUARY 23, 2022
Third Sunday after epiphany



St. John United Church of Christ
10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview Heights, IL
397-6323 Rev. Rosemary Captain 618-660-
8894

gcaptain@charter.net

Liturgy - Rev. Lavon Bayler

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10 Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a Luke 4:14-21

CALL TO WORSHIP: Based on readings
Let the ears of all people be attentive;
the heavens are telling the glory of God.

Everything around us proclaims God's handwork.

Let us bow down and worship ur Creator.

Day and night, God is at work among us.

We are drawn together into one body, the church.

As we commune with God, we know we need one another. Let us honor the good to be found in all people.

Hear once again the laws and commandments.

From them sure and right and true for all.

We weep and mourn our lack of faithfulness.

We seek true community in which all are honored.

INVOCATION: On this holy day, we come together to make sense of our lives. We look to your Word, O God, as a source of understanding. Revive our souls that our hearts may rejoice in your presence. Cleanse and enlighten us with your truth. Liberate us from self-imposed limitations. Let the words of our mouths and the meditations of our heart be acceptable in your sight, O God, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Let us give God our thanks and praise.

GLORIA PATRI: NCH 759

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit,
Three- in-One; as it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

***GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 4:14-21**

¹⁴ Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. ¹⁵ He taught in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

¹⁶ Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. ¹⁷ The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,*

¹⁹ *and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

²⁰ He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. ²¹ He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

Hear the ancient words revealed to us anew.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

MESSAGE: "The Tale of Two Responses – Part 1"

Let's review where we have been through the lectionary on our journey to walk with Jesus through the Gospel of Luke: the birth, the shepherds, the wisemen. We met John the Baptist and we witnessed the baptism of Jesus and we heard the voice of God. We did not read the temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, yet we know Jesus was in the Spirit he received at his baptism and he defeated Satan. Jesus' ministry began with the wedding at Cana, although that story was actually in the Gospel of John.

By now, Jesus knew what his ministry should be but the question is, where should he start? He began in Galilee. Galilee was an area in the north of Palestine about 50 miles by 25 miles. The name itself means a circle and comes from the Hebrew word *Galil*, because it was encircled by non-Jewish nations. The area was densely populated with 204 villages or towns, none with a population less than 15,000. Because there was such a diversity of people and nations surrounded it, new influences had always played upon Galilee and it was the most forward-looking and least conservative part of Palestine. (*This*

might explain why Jesus was well received. The people enjoyed hearing new ideas.)

Jesus began in the synagogue which was the real center of religious life in Palestine. There was only one Temple; but the law said that wherever there were town Jewish families there must be a synagogue; and so, in every town and village it was in the synagogue that the people met to worship.

The synagogue service consisted of three parts; prayer, the reading of scripture, and the teaching part. In the synagogue there was no professional ministry nor any one person to give the address; the president would invite any distinguished person present to speak, and discussion and talk would follow. When reading the scroll, the person stood. When teaching, the person sat. According to verses 14-15, Jesus was well received when he taught in the synagogues in Galilee.

This is response #1. When Jesus spoke, the people listened. They were impressed by his knowledge and his interpretations of the Torah.

AND THEN JESUS WENT HOME. What happened next? Stay tuned.

Next Sunday we will hear **response #2.**

PASTORAL PRAYER: Beginning with a time for silent personal prayer.

As Jesus began his ministry to do God's will, he met many challenges but with the help of God, he persevered. God of wisdom, we are challenged every day from set backs in our desire to pray more, meditate more, read your word more, understand you better. Yet our challenges are very little compared to those Jesus encountered. Jesus died for us. There are very few people who would do that. But help us in our journey to become at least, acceptable in your sight, Holy One.

Lately we have been challenged by this Covid virus. It seems that no matter how hard we try, we can't avoid getting sick, even if it just a mild case. Yet our challenge is very small compared to those who are in ICU's and ventilators. We pray that they know your presence as they pray for wellness. **God did not cause this virus.** God is with us as we fight it. God sends many, many angels recognized as scientists, doctors, nurses, and health care workers to fight this virus and to help us fight it, if we follow their directions. That's the part God has in this pandemic. God has sent angels to our bedsides and we are so grateful. Thank you, God of compassion.

Today we pray for all those on our prayer list and all those we hold dear to our hearts, as we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus . . .

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO SHARE: Thank you for continuing your support of your church. Please mail or drop off your offerings during this time we are not together.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: In the spirit of Christ, we give our best for the world. Your rule among us, O God, is more to be desired than riches. Therefore, we share what you have allowed us to use, giving thanks for the joy of helping others and entering into partnership with them. This is only the beginning of our offering, for we dedicate here our various gifts as apostles, prophets, teachers, healers, helpers, administration, speakers, workers. In all we do, we will seek to serve you by sharing your love. Amen.

COMMISSION AND BLESSING:

May the words of our mouths proclaim God's love. May the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to God.

We go forward as praying, witnessing people. We greet this week with high anticipation.

The Spirit of God accompanies us on our journey. We are anointed for the sharing of good news.

Our words and deeds will release captives.

What we do and say will change our world.

The joy of God is our strength. The law of God revives us and makes us wise.

In purity of heart, we seek to serve. In quiet confidence, we dare to change and grow. Amen.

PRAYER LIST: Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, Agnes Doctolero, David Seneczyn, Cathy Ganschietz, Warren Neff, Jack Harris, Lynn Hursey, Robert Uhrig, Carol White, Dennis Franklin, John Biehl, Cherie Schutzenhofer.